

Grangers oppose program

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✓ Support formulating a water use plan for implementation during a drought or other water shortage emergency;

✓ In a situation where someone's well water has been taken by another user, he should be required to supply water to the aggrieved party;

✓ After the state declares a water emergency, the state should be authorized to take necessary action for equitable distribution of available water.

The delegates suggested that the county conservation district be used in implementing any water policy. The policy makers also recommended that farmers do their best to record their water use so there is a historical record for each farm.

Another newly formed Grange policy favors a gradual shift from real estate taxes for education to a net income tax on personal income

and incorporated businesses. State Master Wismer says they are against the business use and occupancy tax because it is a double burden on agriculture. Wismer says he feels it is almost a penalty for working.

"The guy that doesn't farm his land wouldn't pay tax. The fellow that farms his land would pay tax. The fellow that didn't use his barn would not pay tax, but the person that did use the barn would pay the tax." The Montgomery County farmer agrees that we need a tax on business. "The problem is that agriculture seems to be taxed twice," continues Wismer.

Grange lobbyists will tell Harrisburg the members oppose lifting ceilings on interest rates as the legislature proposes. However, the Grange is calling for a limit on interest rates at 50 percent of the 3 year average of treasury bills.

A resolution on inheritance taxes was approved. As expected, the

delegates recommended legislation that would give proper tax credit to farmers who would continue agriculture production on farm land for a minimum of 10 years.

Members of State Grange committees agree agriculture is in a financial bind and it is worse this year. The delegates voted on a number of proposals that would help dairy prices and surpluses. They are still in favor of 75 percent parity. From the farmer's production standpoint Wismer says he feels that is realistic. "It is going to be quite difficult however from a legislative standpoint," admits Wismer.

One of the committee meetings during the week that generated the most confusing discussion was the issue of bear and elk damage to crops and livestock.

Following the closed fraternal organization's meeting, members of the rural committees said they support reimbursement for crop damage by bears. The money would come from hunting licenses. The Grangers also committed



Kenneth Shlagle, left, of Fleetwood Grange in Berks County, listens intently as State Grange Master Charles Wismer declares him Granger of the Year during the state convention in Altoona this week. Looking on are Governor Dick Thornburgh, right and Secretary Penrose Hollowell.

themselves to helping the farms threatened by elk.

"The game issue is of great importance to rural Pennsylvania," says Wismer. "Rural Pennsylvania does not feel that their interests are being served. That was the mood here. I don't know how to get the Game Commission's attention. It is a very emotional and controversial issue."

State officials addressed the 1,500 visiting Grangers. At the top of the list was Governor Dick Thornburgh. He asked for and got support for welfare reform, economic recovery and his fight against crime. The grange session

were reminded by State Agriculture Secretary Penrose Hollowell that farmers have improved production over the past several years, but efforts must now be made to increase marketing. Transportation secretary Thomas Larson addressed the session in Altoona which was also attended by Rocky Bleier, former Pittsburgh Steeler and honorary chairman of "Vote Yes For Water," a three hundred million dollar bond issue to improve water systems across the state.

Many of the Grangers are returning home, while others are on the national session in Spokane, WA.

10 Clean Water requests approved

LANCASTER — The first 10 applications have been approved on requests for federal funds to help finance the Clean Water Program for the headwaters of the Conestoga River.

"The committee took favorable action on the first 10 applications at a meeting on Wednesday," Ray Brubaker of the Lancaster ASCS Office, reported.

The initial 10 applications include farms scattered throughout the Conestoga headwaters area in the eastern section of Lancaster County.

The requests have been made by owners of farms generally ranging in the 80 to 100-acre size. The majority of the cleanup projects specified in the requests deal with the handling of animal wastes, Brubaker said.

Meanwhile, the series of meetings to explain the federally-funded program is continuing.

The second such session was held Wednesday evening at the Martindale Fire Hall. Approximately 25 farmers attended. The next informational meeting

will be held Thursday at 7:30 p.m. at the Brecknock Elementary School. The final meeting will be on November 10 at the Union Grove Alternative School.

In addition to the initial 10 approved requests, two others have been filed, plus a third just received at Wednesday's meeting.

Among future steps in the program is the formulation of a Clean Streams Plan for participating farms by the Soil Conservation Service.

The federal program includes a grant of \$1.9 million to assist farmers in better controlling and eliminating the entrance of ag pollutants into the Conestoga headwaters.

The Rural Clean Water Project is designed to provide assistance to keep such things as fertilizer, herbicides, silt and manure run-off out of the streams and tributaries and thus improve the water quality of the Conestoga.

Participation in the program is voluntary and federal funds provide cost-sharing up to \$50,000 per farm in the critical area.—DA

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